

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1 – 10. (Canceled)

11. (New) An inertization method for reducing the risk of fire in an enclosed protected area, in which the oxygen content in the protected area is maintained for a defined period at a control concentration (RK) below an operating concentration (BK) by feeding an oxygen-displacing gas from a primary source;

wherein in the event of a failure of the primary source, the control concentration (RK) is maintained by means of a secondary source for an emergency operating period when the operating concentration (BK) is equal to or substantially equal to a design concentration (AK) defined for the protected area, or wherein the control concentration (RK) and the operating concentration (BK), forming a failure safety margin (ASA), are lowered so far below the design concentration (AK) defined for the protected area that the growth curve of the oxygen content, reaches a limit concentration (GK) defined for the protected area only in a predefined time when the primary source fails.

12. (New) An inertization method according to claim 11, wherein the failure safety margin (ASA) is determined by taking an air change rate applicable for the protected area, including an n_{50} value for the protected area, and/or the pressure differential between the protected area and the surrounding area into consideration.

13. (New) An inertization method according to claim 11, wherein the design concentration (AK) is lowered by a safety margin (S) to below the limit concentration (GK) defined for the protected area.

14. (New) An inertization method according to claim 11, comprising a detector for detecting a fire parameter, wherein the oxygen content in the protected area is lowered quickly to the control concentration upon detecting an incipient fire or a fire when the oxygen content was previously at a higher level.

15. (New) An inertization method according to claim 11, wherein the control range is about $\pm 0.2\%$ by volume oxygen content around the control concentration (RK).

16. (New) An inertization method according to claim 11, wherein the oxygen content in the protected area is controlled with respect to the air change rate, including the n_{50} value of the protected area, and/or the pressure differential between the protected area and the surrounding area.

17. (New) An inertization method according to claim 11, wherein the extinguishing agent for maintaining the control concentration (RK) in the protected area is calculated with

respect to the air change rate of the target area, including the n_{50} value of the protected area, and/or the pressure differential between the target area and the surrounding area.

18. (New) A device for implementing the method according to claim 17, wherein the primary source is at least a machine that produces oxygen-displacing gas, a cylinder array, a buffer volume or a deoxydation machine.